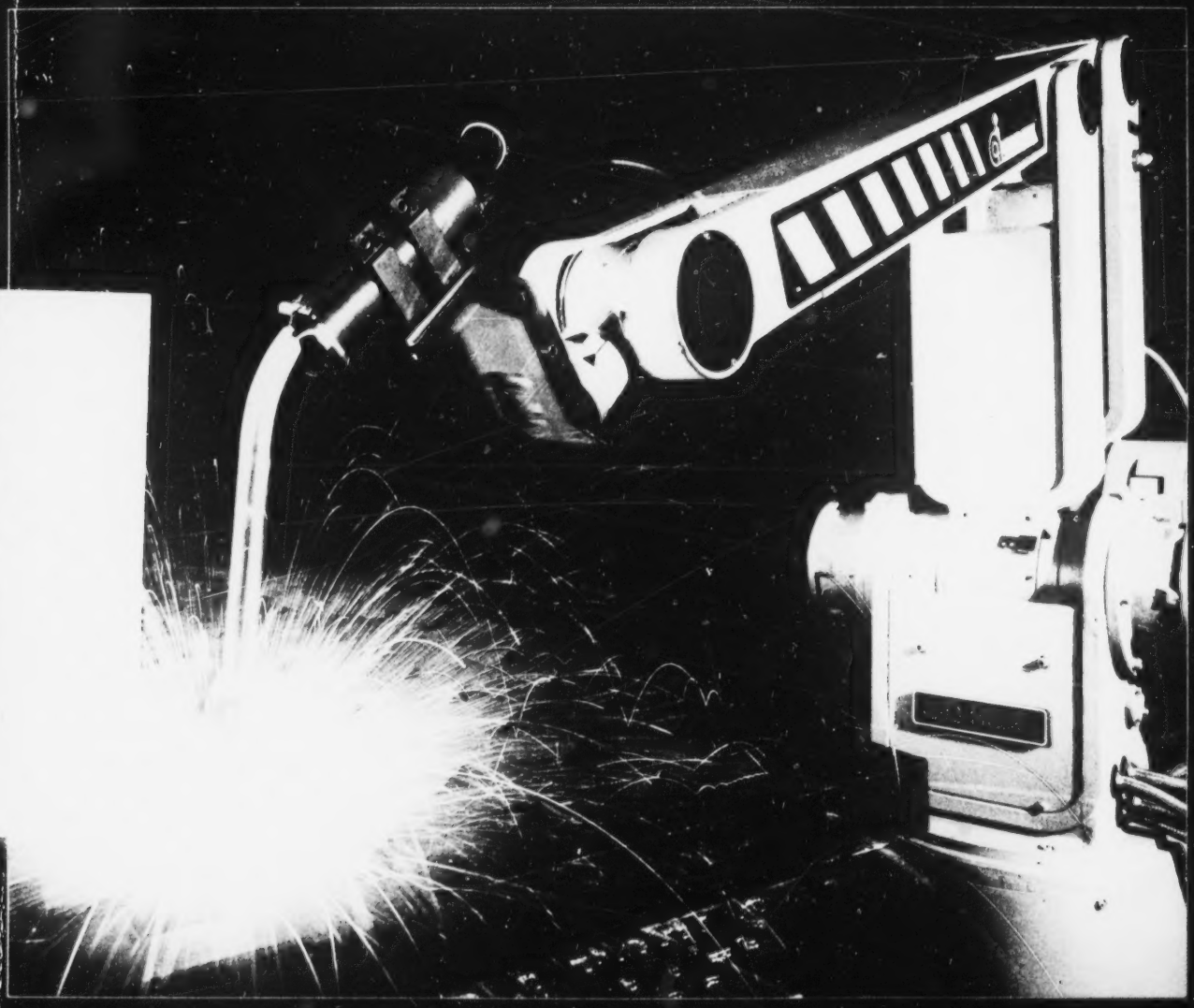
RV BUSINESS

OCTOBER 1984 $2.00

HERE COME THE ROBOTS, READY OR NOT



Micro-Minis Prove Smaller Is Better

Making The Computer Write-Off Work

Complete Dodger Show Preview: Floorplans, Listings

Jayco

Please send me more information on Jayco RVs and dealer programs.
I currently deal in these product lines:

I'm interested in Jayco: Fold-downs, Travel Trailers, Mini Motorhomes, Fifth Wheels, Truck Campers

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Dealership
Address
City
State Zip
Telephone

Jayco, Inc.
P.O. Box 460
Middlebury IN 46540

RVB1084

RV BUSINESS

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ON THE COVER: No longer just a sci-fi vision, the robot world is upon us. But is the RV industry ready to put those humanlike machines into place on the production lines? The answer, and even more questions, begins on page 50. Photo courtesy of Automatix Incorporated.

Perspective

An analysis of RVB's monthly survey
of its Dealer Advisory Board Members

GAYLORD MAXWELL

	NEW						USED					
	FOR MONTH			YEAR-TO-DATE			FOR MONTH			YEAR-TO-DATE		
	JULY '84	JULY '83	% CHANGE	1984	1983	% CHANGE	JULY '84	JULY '83	% CHANGE	1984	1983	% CHANGE
MOTORHOMES	98	107	– 8%	747	710	+ 5%	79	75	+ 5%	549	490	+12%
TRAVEL TRAILERS	117	100	+ 17	663	701	– 5%	86	88	– 2%	558	590	–11%
TRUCK CAMPERS	22	16	+38%	126	106	+19%	22	25	–12%	136	117	+16%
CAMPING TRAILERS	183	187	– 2%	1,270	1,008	+26%	42	36	+17%	216	193	+12%
FIFTH-WHEELS	39	27	+44%	252	189	+33%	14	8	+43%	68	72	– 6%

	FOR MONTH			YEAR-TO-DATE		
	JULY '84	JULY '83	% CHANGE	1984	1983	% CHANGE
SALES VOLUME	$8,773,248	$7,899,480	+11%	$58,478,696	$51,321,497	+14%
TOTAL UNIT SALES	702	669	+ 5%	4,555	4,176	+ 9%
NEW UNIT SALES	459	437	+ 5%	3,058	2,714	+13%
USED UNIT SALES	243	232	+ 5%	1,497	1,462	+ 2%

July was a mixed bag for the Dealer Advisory Board (DAB). Some dealers were markedly down from last July while others set new records. RV types that had been in the forefront in sales this year suddenly fell into the minus columns while types that had been showing signs of lethargy suddenly picked up. Used units moved at a rate slightly ahead of last year.

Year-to-date, the figures are still impressive. Travel trailers are running at a slightly slower pace than last year. Motorhomes and camping trailers dropped into the minus columns for the month, but both are still ahead of last year. And fifth-wheels are doing exceptionally well for our DAB dealers.

As might be expected at this time of the year, close-outs have caused grosses to drop. Consequently, profit ratings generally are lower than at any time this year. Even used units, which have been running from good to excellent all year, have some ratings in the fair or poor columns.

Overall, dealers seem to be doing quite well. It isn't quite the gravy train that it was a year ago, but things are still on track.

MOTORHOMES

For the first time in almost two years, the DAB shows a minus in new unit sales for a month. However, an exceptionally poor month for one large motorhome dealer accounts for the drop. The actual picture for the average dealer is still reasonably good. With all the new competition, it is remarkable that most have been able to more than hold their own. Used units are still much in demand, although prices have dropped. Abnormally high grosses aren't as easy as they were a year ago. It is becoming a more stable market, but still a very profitable one. Profits were rated good.

TRAVEL TRAILERS

After several months of minuses, this category has again jumped into the plus column in new unit sales, although some DAB memebers are still running well behind last year. Though the majority of our members are off the mark, a few dealers seem to be in the right place at the right time with the right merchandise and are doing exceptionally well. There doesn't seem to be any particular rhyme or reason to the thing. Used trailers aren't doing well for some dealers. The fact that sales are off 11 percent year-to-date suggests that the boom is fizzling somewhat. Profits on new units are generally rated fair to good, but used ranged from good to excellent. The units that are sold bring good prices.

TRUCK CAMPERS

The upsurge in new unit sales of this RV type is attributable largely to one camper specialist who had a field day in July. Other dealers on the DAB, all of whom stock truck campers only modestly, fared about as usual. Profit ratings ranged from poor to excellent, about equally divided among the columns.

CAMPING TRAILERS

For the first time this year, new units fell into the minus column. Down 2 percent isn't much, but for a type that has been doing exceptionally well to fall at all is unusual this year. In spite of the overall drop, some folding trailer specialists are having a field day. Others can't understand why they aren't. As with truck campers, profit ratings range all the way from poor to excellent. Dealers who are selling the most have the highest grosses.

FIFTH-WHEELS

The percentage increases for the month are exceptionally good. Two members of the DAB who specialize in fivers had an excellent July. Nothing could be more obvious than the fact that if you specialize and do the job right, you get results. Profits were rated about equally from fair to excellent. As with camping trailers, those two dealers who sell the most had the best profits. Δ

Perspective is a compilation of data provided by RVB's Dealer Advisory Board (DAB), a group comprised of 22 dealers representing a cross-section of the U.S. dealer body. This report is an attempt to reflect the current retail sales picture; it does not purport to indicate RV production or factory sales to dealers.

WDA QUARTERLY SALES FIGURES

RV Business publishes a quarterly report of sales statistics from the Warehouse Distributors Association. The chart shown here is based upon a representative sampling of WDA members, as compiled in the second quarter of 1984. While these statistics are not intended to be fully indicative of the sales volume among distributors in the RV and MH industries, they are presented here as an insight into the supplier/distributor industry.

SALES VOLUME

	SECOND-QUARTER SALES VOLUME	
	PERCENT CHANGE 1983 to 1984	RANGE OF CHANGE
REGION 1	+6.4%	+19.1% to −2.7%
REGION 2	+46.1%	+68.3% to −6.8%
REGION 3	+23.8%	+49.5% to +14.4%
REGION 4	+ 3.3%	+62.8% to −181.5%
REGION 5	+12.6%	+68.6% to −10.2%
REGION 6	+15.4%	+70.7% to +9.6%

Region 1: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia and Washington, D.C.; **Region 2:** Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North and South Carolina and Tennessee; **Region 3:** Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North and South Dakota, Ohio and Wisconsin; **Region 4:** Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Texas; **Region 5:** Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming; **Region 6:** Canada.

RVIA, JULY

The marketing committee of the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association has announced that the total number of recreational vehicles shipped from manufacturers' plants during July 1984 was 31,000 units, up 9.0% from July of 1983.

The shipment figures released by the association are contained in a report compiled for the membership by RVIA's marketing committee under the chairmanship of Allen Yoder Jr. of Jayco, Incorporated, Middlebury, Indiana.

RV shipments were as follows in July 1984		July 1983	Percent Change	Cumulative 1984	Cumulative 1983	Percent Change
TRAVEL TRAILERS	6,200	6,300	− 1.6%	51,100	46,700	+ 9.2%
FIFTH-WHEELS	1,600	1,600	-0-	12,600	10,600	+18.9%
TRUCK CAMPERS	700	700	-0-	5,500	4,500	+22.2%
MULTI-USE VEHICLES	14,600	12,300	+18.7%	107,600	92,900	+15.8%
TYPE A: MOTOR-HOMES	2,800	2,700	+ 3.7%	25,500	18,600	+37.1%
TYPE B: VAN CAMPERS	500	300	+66.7%	4,900	3,200	+53.1%
TYPE C: MINI MOTOR-HOMES	2,300	2,600	−11.5%	22,700	18,000	+26.1%
FOLDING CAMPING TRAILERS	3,700	2,300	+17.4%	25,800	24,000	+ 7.5%
TOTALS	31,400	28,800	+ 9.0%	255,600	218,500	+17.0%